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FM AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3100

INFO RUCNASE/ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE

RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING IMMEDIATE 2625

RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA IMMEDIATE 2814

RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE 0653

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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 KUALA LUMPUR 000675

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: BU MA PGOV PREL

SUBJECT: STRONG MALAYSIAN REACTION TO AUNG SAN SUU KYI

VERDICT

REF: STATE 83598

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: In response to reftel points, Malaysia's Foreign Ministry told the DCM on August 13 that officials were following up with ASEAN member countries on the possibility of a special meeting to discuss the Aung San Suu Kyi (ASSK) verdict, in line with Foreign Minister Anifah Aman's strong August 11 statement regretting the verdict and calling for "immediate consultation among ASEAN member countries." There were as yet no plans for such a meeting, but one possibility was on the margins of UNGA in September, MFA Under Secretary Mohammed Satik Kethertany unofficially suggested. He also drew attention to strong public responses to the verdict from the governments of Indonesia, Thailand and the Philippines. A scathing editorial in the government-owned New Straits Times called the verdict "vindictive." END SUMMARY.

2.(SBU) Comment: Foreign Minister Anifah's strong statement and his call for a special ASEAN meeting, though apparently not coordinated with other ASEAN governments, is consistent with the GOM's more critical public line on Burma since the advent of the Najib administration. Whether this rhetoric will translate into actual deeds and actions remains to be seen. End Comment.

Strong Reaction to ASSK Verdict

¶3. (SBU) Foreign Minister Anifah Aman released a strong statement on August 11 stating that Malaysia was "deeply disappointed over the decision to place Aung San Suu Kyi (ASSK) under house arrest for eighteen months." Describing the verdict as "regrettable", the minister added Malaysia would "undertake immediate consultation among ASEAN member countries to discuss further on this development." He reiterated Malaysia's earlier call on the GOB "to release all political detainees including ASSK to enable them to take part in the election process which is scheduled to take place in 2010." The Minister echoed ASEAN's call for Burma, to "show its strong commitment towards national reconciliation and democratization process to implement its Road Map for Democracy."

¶4. (SBU) On August 13, MFA Under Secretary for Southeast Asia Mohammed Satik Kethertany said his government agreed with reftel points, praised POTUS's statement on the ASSK verdict and told the DCM that the MFA had contacted other ASEAN foreign ministries about FM Anifah's call to hold a special meeting to discuss the ASSK verdict. While there was no clear response so far, Satik said unofficially that such a meeting could be held on the margins of UNGA. He noted strong public reactions to the verdict from the governments

of Indonesia, Thailand and the Philippines, adding that Cambodia's and Vietnam's more cautious approach was as expected. FM Anifah had asked the ASEAN National Secretariat within MFA, headed by Ambassador Zainuddin, to do the follow-up within ASEAN.

Other reactions

¶ 15. (SBU) The Chairperson of the Malaysian Chapter of the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Myanmar Caucus (AIPMC) and Democratic Action Party (DAP) Member of Parliament Lim Kit Siang urged ASEAN member countries not to just express disappointment but to take concrete measures including either expelling or immediately suspending Burma from ASEAN. In an August 11 statement, he described the verdict as showing "utter contempt (by) the military junta" for "ASEAN's constructive engagement policy." United Malays National Organization (UMNO) Youth Chief Khairy Jamaluddin supported Kit Siang's view that ASEAN should immediately suspend Burma.

He described the verdict in as "the culmination of a sham trial designed to prevent Suu Kyi from participating in planned elections next year" and "a disgusting stain on ASEAN's reputation." He added that the immediate suspension of Burma's membership from the regional bloc "is the only option open for ASEAN to save it from being found guilty by association with the junta."

¶ 16. (SBU) Most local media reporting on the verdict concentrated on FM Anifah's official statement. However, government-owned New Straits Times published a scathing

KUALA LUMP 00000675 002 OF 002

editorial entitled "vindictive verdict" on August 13, describing the Burmese junta as malicious in "removing the democracy icon, whose party won a landslide in the 1990 elections, from the political scene when elections are due to be held next year." The editorial added that despite the "the disdain for international opinion so clearly expressed in the junta's judgment," the world "must continue to speak up and apply pressure on the generals, to express solidarity and moral support to those seeking legitimate democratic change."

KEITH